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PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #1965 1611720
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FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4999
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 001965

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/10/2016
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SUBJECT: SCIRI CONTACTS SAY SECRETARY-GENERAL OF COUNCIL OF
MINISTERS STILL UP FOR GRABS

Classified By: Political Counselor Margaret Scobey reasons 1.4 (b) and
(d).

¶1. (C) At a June 9 luncheon with PolOffs, SCIRI politburo member Ridha Jawad Taki reported that Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki had rejected multiple SCIRI-proposed candidates for the Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers position. According to Taki, Maliki had firmly refused previous Secretary-General Zuhair Humadi and four other SCIRI

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candidates, of which Taki was one. On June 8, Maliki told Taki that Moqtada al-Sadr continued to insist that the position be given to a Sadrists. Taki, however, pointed out that this directly contradicted the agreement Abdul Aziz al-Hakim and the PM made two months earlier in which Maliki promised the position to SCIRI. Taki said he anticipates Maliki will appoint ex-Dawa and PM insider Sami al-Askari to the post. He laughed out loud when he mentioned that DPM Barham Salih told him that Maliki had promised the Kurds (Farhad Hussen) the position and then slapped his knee when he described his conversation with Tarik al-Hashimi who said that Maliki had offered it to the Sunnis.

2 (C) In all, Taki claimed to be pleased that the cabinet has been formed. He said he considered new Minister of Interior Shia independent Jawad al-Bolani a better choice than others but added that Bolani is inexperienced and questioned whether he would be strong enough to make hard decisions.

¶3. (C) Both Taki and SCIRI Chief of Staff Haitham al-Husseini scoffed at recent rumors that sometime Fadhila Deputy General Secretary Ali al-Dabbagh may become the new Minister of Transportation. Taki explained that Moqtada al-Sadr informed the Shia Coalition leadership committee (G7) on June 8 that he wanted to switch out the ministers of Health, Transportation and Tourism for three other Sadrists. Since al-Dabbagh belongs to the Fadhila party he has little chance at becoming Minister of Transportation, said Taki. He added that the G7 had rejected the Sadrists proposal claiming it would not be good to switch out ministers so soon after the cabinet was formed. (NOTE: In a separate June 9 conversation, Dabbagh told PolOffs that he did not consider himself a Fadhila member anymore, and had quietly so advised party spiritual leader Ayatollah Yaqubi. END NOTE.)
KHALILZAD